Birthday Observance at Memorial

Nixon Praises Lincoln's Poise

2/13/74

By Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Nixon went to the Lincoln Memorial yesterday to praise the Civil War President as a man who, although violently criticized, never showed his hurt.

Speaking on the 165th anniversary of Lincoln's birth, the President said, without any reference to his own difficulties, that Lincoln's ability to remain strong despite violent attacks inspires all Americans today.

"No President in history has been more vilified during his time in the presidency than Lincoln," Mr. Nixon said at a noon-time ceremony in the memorial.

Those who knew the 16th President well have written that "he was very deeply hurt by what was said about him and drawn about him, but on the other hand Lincoln had that great strength of character never to display it, always to stand tall and strong and firm no matter how harsh or unfair the criticism might be," Mr. Nixon said.

Lincoln is "more revered" than any other President for many reasons, Mr. Nixon said, but especially for his "character . . . the humility, the humor, the feeling and kindness for people, but perhaps more than anything else, the poise under pressure."

The President spoke without notes, but aides said he wrote the speech out in longhand before driving to the memorial, where several hundred persons were waiting in the cold to hear him.

Although he made no reference to Watergate and the attacks that have been made on him, both he and members of his family have spoken of how unfair they believe many of the criticisms have been.

Later in the day, the President and Mrs. Nixon drove to the home of Alice Roosevelt Longworth, daughter of President Theodore Roosevelt, to pay their respects to her on her 90th birthday.

They were accompanied by Julie and David Eisenhower and carried gifts for Mrs.

See PRESIDENT, A2, Col. 2

Lincoln Is Praised By President

PRESIDENT, From A1

Longworth. They presented her with a Victorian music box that plays Strauss waltzes, and also gave her a carton of caviar.

"It was a great party," the President said as he left the residence.

At the Lincoln Memorial, the President said that Lincoln's advice to Americans today would be that the United States should "not turn away from greatness despite the fact that some other nations in the world turn inward, failing to assume their responsibilities for building a peaceful world."

The reference seemed directed primarily at France, which at the energy conference here in the past two days again has assumed an independent posture to the acute embarrassment of other Western nations.

Lincoln would have said that a great nation will use its strength and wealth to build a world in which "peace and freedom can survive for themselves and for others as well," Mr. Nixon said.

"I conclude simply by paraphrasing what Lincoln said so many years ago so much more eloquently, we could meanly lose what is mankind's last best hope for peace and freedom, but we could also nobly save it.

"Abraham Lincoln, who saved the Union, would say to us today, let this great Union—North, South, East and West—now save the cause of peace and freedom for the whole world," the President said.